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HINDU PRAYER IN CONGRESS

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

"An illustrious day for all Americans and a memorable day for us." So declared Rajan Zed, a Hindu priest from Nevada, after being invited to open the July 12, 2007 session of the United States Senate with a Hindu prayer—a prayer that he indicated would rely heavily on Hindu scriptures, the Rig Veda, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad-Gita (Burchfiel, 2007). Wearing the saffron robes synonymous with Hindu priests, Zed sprinkled on the Senate podium some "Ganga jal"—water from the Ganges River considered holy by Hindus (Haniffa, 2007)—and then uttered the following prayer:

May we meditate on the transcendental glory of the Deity Supreme, who is inside the heart of the Earth, inside the life of the sky and inside the soul of the heaven. May He stimulate and illuminate our minds. Lead us from the unreal to real, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality. May we be protected together. May we be nourished together. May we work together with great vigor. May our study be en-

lightening. May no obstacle arise between us. May the Senators strive constantly to serve the welfare of the world, performing their duties with the welfare of others always in mind, because by devotion to selfless work one attains the supreme goal of life. May they work carefully and wisely, guided by compassion, and without thought for themselves. United your resolve, united your hearts, may your spirits be at one, that you may long dwell in unity and concord. Peace, peace, peace be unto all (see Brown, 2007).

The architects of American civilization would be aghast. To give credence or credibility to pantheistic religion ("God" inside the Earth, sky, etc.), that advocates belief in thousands of "gods" while rejecting the one true God of the Bible, would be unthinkable in America in 1776. It was equally unthinkable for most Americans until the last 40-50 years. The politically correct climate now enshrouding America literally is suffocating the moral and religious sensibilities of society. The nod to Hinduism follows closely

on the heels of the election of a Muslim to the U.S. House of Representatives as well as the first atheist in Congress (see Miller, 2006; Miller, 2007).

It was on June 28, 1787, in the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, that one of the least religious of the Founders, Benjamin Franklin, then in his 80s, rose to his feet and made the proposal that Congress open their sessions with prayer. Yet, on that occasion, the God, the religion, and the sacred Scriptures that Franklin had in mind were certainly not the gods, religion, and scripture of Hinduism. Here was his proposal in his own words [NOTE: Lest the reader miss the fact that Franklin's speech is thor-



Varanasi, the City of Shiva, one of the holiest cities in India, where Hindu pilgrims come for prayer and worship on the Ganges River

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Sri Venkateswara Swami Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago (Aurora, Illinois)

oughly saturated with allusions to the one true God and the Bible, such references are noted in bold and direct biblical citations are bracketed]:

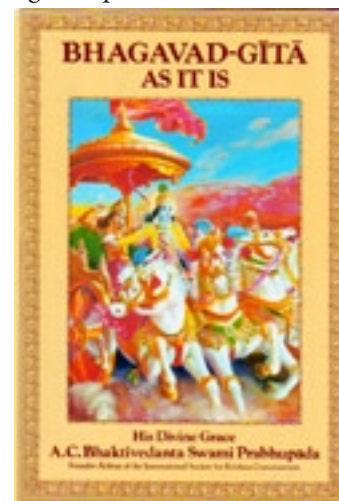
In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to **the Father of lights** [James 1:17], to illuminate our understanding? In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, **we had daily prayer in this room for divine protection**. Our prayers, Sir, were heard and they were graciously answered. And have we now forgotten **that powerful friend**? Or, do we imagine we no longer need **his assistance**? I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more **convincing proofs** [Acts 1:3] I see of this

truth—that **God governs in the affairs of men** [Daniel 4:17]. And if a **sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice** [Matthew 10:29], is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the **Sacred Writings**, that “**except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it**” [Psalm 127:1]. I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without **his concurring aid** we shall succeed in this political building no better than the **Builders of Babel** [Genesis 11]: We shall be divided by our partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a **reproach and by word down to future ages** [Psalm 44:13-14; Jeremiah 24:9]. I therefore beg leave to move—that henceforth **prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessing** on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to

business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service (1787, emp. and bracketed material added).

Founders like Franklin would not have dignified pagan religion that constitutes a blatant insult to the God of the Universe—the One Whom they ardently implored to guide and protect them. Neither would they have accepted the idea that “sacred writings” include the Hindu Vedas.

For sure, the Founders of America desired religious freedom. Technically, by “religious freedom” they meant that all Protestant denominations should have the right to pursue their own interpre-



tation of the Bible and to worship the God and Christ of the Bible according to their own consciences without governmental interference. As one of the Fathers of American Jurisprudence, Joseph Story, explained:

The real object of the [first] amendment was, not to countenance, much less to advance Mahometanism, or Judaism, or infidelity, by prostrating Christianity; but **to exclude all rivalry among Christian sects, and to prevent any national ecclesiastical establishment, which should give to an hierarchy the exclusive patronage of the national government** (1833, Vol. 3, Bk. 3, Ch. 44, Sec. 1871, emp. added). [NOTE: See the wording proposed by the “Father of the Bill of Rights,” George Mason, in Rowland, 1964, pp. 13-15.]

Nevertheless, the Founders were perfectly willing to extend the right of religious freedom to those who did not share the Protestant brand of the Christian religion. They opposed all religious persecution for the simple reason that Christian people love their fellowman and do not mistreat others (Matthew 7:12).

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Krishna, Lord of India, eighth avatar or reincarnation of the god Vishnu, whom legend says may have had 16,000 wives

But make no mistake: the Founders believed in the God of the Bible, and the vast majority of them believed in the validity of the Christian religion **to the exclusion of all other gods and religions** (see Miller, 2007). They would not have countenanced giving non-Christian religions any sort of public endorsement or favorable encouragement. This fact is demonstrated easily by their innumerable forthright declarations regarding the essentiality of Christianity as the foundation on which the Republic was founded (see Miller, 2005a; Miller, 2005b). It also is seen in the occasional explicit repudiation of such non-Christian religions as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Hindus typically were styled “hindoos,” “pagans,” “heathens,” and “idolaters.”

For example, consider the remarks of John Jay, a brilliant Founder with a long and distinguished career in the formation and shaping of American civilization from the beginning. He not only was a member of the Continental Congress from 1774-1776, serving as its President from 1778-1779, but he also helped to frame the New York State Constitution and then served as the Chief Justice of the New York Supreme Court. He co-authored the *Federalist Papers*, was appointed as the first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court by George Washington (1789-1795), served as Governor of New York (1795-1801), and was the vice-president (1816-1821) and then second president (1821-1827) of the American Bible Society. At the annual meeting of the American Bible Society on May 9, 1822, Jay commented on the almost uni-

versal view of Americans at the time relative to non-Christian religions:

Although an **immense heathen population in India** was under the dominion, control, and influence of a Christian nation, yet it was deemed better policy to leave them in **blindness** than to risk incurring the inconveniences which might result from authorizing or encouraging attempts to relieve them from it. This policy has at length met with the neglect it deserved. **The Gospel has been introduced into India**, under the auspices of the British government; and various means are co-operating to advance its progress, and hasten the time **when the King of saints will emancipate that people from the domination of the prince of darkness** (1890, 4:484, emp. added).

Jay obviously viewed the non-Christian religions of India as “heathen” and the work of Satan (“the prince of darkness” being an allusion to the Devil [cf. Luke 22:53; Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 11:14; Ephesians 2:2]).

Where did the Founders get their ideas regarding polytheism, paganism, and idolatry? Their assessment of Hinduism was in complete harmony with the Bible’s own declarations:

Those who make an image, all of them are useless, and their precious things shall not profit; they are their own witnesses; they neither see nor know, that they may be ashamed. **Who would form a god or mold an image that profits him nothing?** Surely all his companions would be ashamed; and the workmen, they are mere men. Let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, they shall be ashamed together. The blacksmith with the tongs works one in the coals, fashions it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms. Even so, he is hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water and is faint. The craftsman stretches out his rule, he marks one out with chalk; he fashions it with a plane, he marks it out with the compass, **and makes it like the figure**



The four-headed Brahma, Hindu god of Creation



Worshippers praying to Krishna in the Palace of Gold

of a man, according to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house. He cuts down cedars for himself, and takes the cypress and the oak; he secures it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it. Then it shall be for a man to burn, for he will take some of it and warm himself; yes, he kindles it and bakes bread; **indeed, he makes a god and worships it; he makes it a carved image, and falls down to it.** He burns half of it in the fire; with this half he eats meat; he roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He even warms himself and says, “Ah! I am warm, I have seen the fire.” **And the rest of it he makes into a god, his carved image. He falls down before it and worships it**, prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god!” They do not know nor understand.... A deceived heart has turned him aside (Isaiah 44:9-20, emp. added).

What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it, the molded image, a teacher of lies that the maker of its mold should trust in it, to make mute idols? Woe to him who says to wood, “Awake!” To silent stone, “Arise! It shall teach!” Behold, **it is overlaid with gold and silver, yet in it there is no breath at all.** But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him (Habakkuk 2:18-20, emp. added).

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell; they have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. **Those who make them are like them**; so is everyone who trusts in them (Psalm 115:4-8, emp. added).

Every metal smith is put to shame by the carved image; for his molded image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are futile, a work of errors; in the time of their punishment they shall perish (Jeremiah 51:17-18).

The attitude of the Founders toward Hindus may be seen in their attitude toward the Native American tribal groups that populated the North American continent at the time. Like Hindus, the Indians believed in many deities. In a letter dated May 2, 1788, addressed to a Moravian preacher named John Ettwein, George Washington applauded the efforts of a Christian organization whose stated mission efforts were for the purpose of “propagating the Gospel among the heathen”:

So far as I am capable of judging, the principles upon which the society is founded and the rules laid down for its government, appear to be well cal-



The many-handed Indian deity—Durga

culated to promote **so laudable and arduous an undertaking**, and you will permit me to add that if an event so long and so earnestly desired as that of **converting the Indians to Christianity** and consequently to civilization, can be effected, the Society of Bethlehem bids fair to bear a very considerable part in it (emp. added).

The exclusivity of Christianity also was made clear by General Washington during the Revolutionary War when he delivered a speech to the Delaware Indian Chiefs on May 12, 1779:

You do well to wish to learn our arts and ways of life, and above all, **the religion of Jesus Christ**. These will make you a greater and happier people than you are. Congress will do every thing they can to assist you in this wise intention; and to tie the knot of friendship and union so fast, that noth-

ing shall ever be able to loose it (15:55, emp. added).

Another example of the Founders’ view of non-Christian religion is the discussion that took place on the floor of the North Carolina State Convention that met to debate ratification of the federal *Constitution*. On Wednesday, July 30, 1788, Henry Abbot (a minister) articulated serious concerns entertained by some of the delegates. They were unconvinced that the *Constitution* provided the same guarantees as the state constitution for citizens to practice **Christianity** according to their own interpretation of the Bible without interference from the federal government. They also were concerned that the absence of fixed religious test oaths might eventually be misconstrued to allow people who embraced false religions or even atheism to make encroachments:

Some are afraid, Mr. Chairman, that, should the Constitution be received, they would be deprived of **the privilege of worshipping God** according to their consciences, which would be taking from them a benefit they enjoy under the present constitution. They wish to know if their religious and civil liberties be secured under this system, or whether the general government may not make laws infringing their religious liberties.... The exclusion of religious tests is by many thought dangerous and impolitic. **They suppose that if there be no religious test required, pagans, deists, and Mahometans might obtain offices among us, and that the senators and representatives might all be pagans....** I would be glad [if] some gentleman would endeavor to obviate these objections, in order to satisfy the religious part of the society (Elliot, 1836, 4:191-192, emp. added).

To their thinking, Hindus were included under the label “pagans.”

A response to Abbot was offered by James Iredell, who, since the Revolution, had served the state of North Carolina both as a judge on the state Superior Court as well as state attorney general, and was soon to be appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court by George Washington: “Mr. Chairman, nothing is more desirable than to remove the scruples of any gentleman on this interesting subject. Those concerning religion are entitled to particular respect” (Elliot, 4:192). He proceeded to explain at length that the establishment of one Christian sect above another always has led to persecution and war—as evidenced in Catholic countries as well as by the Church of



A statue of the elephant god Ganesha at an Indian wedding

England, from which they only recently had extricated themselves. Consequently, the restriction placed on Congress in the federal *Constitution* would prevent the government from interfering with the free practice of the Christian religion. He then remarked:

But it is objected that the people of America may, perhaps, **choose representatives who have no religion at all, and that pagans and Mahometans may be admitted into offices**. But how is it possible to exclude any set of men, without taking away that principle of religious freedom which we ourselves so warmly contend for? This is the foundation on which persecution has been raised in every part of the world. The people in power were always right, and every body else wrong. If you admit the least difference, the door to persecution is opened. Nor would it answer the purpose, for the worst part of the excluded sects would comply with the test, and the best men only be kept out of our counsels (Elliot, 4:494, emp. added).



The Hindu festival of Thaipusam at the Batu Caves in Kuala Lumpur

Finding Nebo-Sarsekim

Kyle Butt, M.A.

Critics of the Bible attack every facet of its credibility. These critics claim that the books were not written at the time they profess to have been written, that the men whose names the books bear are not the actual writers, and that the biblical characters are mental fabrications of the authors. Such criticism, however, is impossible to maintain rationally and honestly in the face of the vast amount of evidence that verifies the validity and authenticity of the 66 books of the Bible. Archaeological findings provide one line of evidence that continues to add credence to the biblical text. Tablets, seals, papyri, pottery, and a host of other ancient artifacts have surfaced that document the lives of characters mentioned in the Bible. These finds often show that the biblical texts under discussion were written at the time they claim to have been written, and that the biblical characters were historic and real.

One such archaeological find recently came to light. In 1920, the British Museum acquired a small stone tablet about two inches wide and one inch high. This stone tablet went into a large cache of tablets with ancient cuneiform writing on them. Since few people have the skill and knowledge to translate cuneiform, the tablet sat untranslated in the British Museum for about eight decades. Recently, however, Dr. Michael Jursa of the University of Vienna, one of the few people who can read cuneiform, translated the small stone tablet (Alberge, 2007).

The information on the tablet is nothing inherently spectacular. The tablet is dated to 595 B.C. and simply states that a Babylonian official named Nebo-Sarsekim dedicated a large gift of gold to the temple of Esangila in Babylon (Reynolds, 2007). While this inscription is unremarkable by itself, it provides an exciting link to the biblical text.

In Jeremiah 39, the prophet described Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar's successful attack on the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah wrote that Nebuchadnezzar penetrated the walls of Jerusalem in the 11th year of King Zedekiah, which corresponds to 587 B.C. Upon infiltrating the walls, Nebuchadnezzar and several of his Babylonian princes sat at the Middle Gate. One of the princes listed as sitting with Nebuchadnezzar was Sarsechim (Jeremiah 39:3). The name "Sarsechim" is recognized as the same name as Nebo-Sarsekim. Thus, the small stone tablet mentions a Babylonian official alive in 595 B.C. and less than 10 years later Jeremiah mentioned an official by the same name. One member of the British Museum's staff, Dr. Irving Finkel, who works in the Department of the Middle East, said: "A mundane commer-

cial transaction takes its place as a primary witness to one of the turning points in Old Testament history. This is a tablet that deserves to be famous" (as quoted in Alberge, 2007).

Skeptics already have begun to attack the find. They suggest that the Nebo-Sarsekim on the tablet could be a different Sarsekim from the one mentioned by Jeremiah. While there is always the possibility that they are not the same person, the circumstantial evidence linking the two names establishes a strong case that the names refer to the same person. They both mention a Babylonian official, during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, in a time frame that would be expected if the same person is under discussion. In fact, besides a few "ultra-skeptics," the find seems to be accepted by the majority of scholars as extrabiblical evidence for the existence of the official mentioned in Jeremiah 39:3.

Concerning the significance of the find, Dr. Finkel stated: "If Nebo-Sarsekim existed, which other lesser figures in the Old Testament existed? A throwaway detail in the Old Testament turns out to be accurate and true. I think that it means that the whole of the narrative [of Jeremiah] takes on a new kind of power" (as quoted in Reynolds, 2007).

The biblical documents have more than archaeological evidence to commend them. Their internal consistency, unity, predictive prophecy, and scientific accuracy combine to produce an irrefutable case for the Bible's divine inspiration. Archaeological finds such as the tablet inscription, do, however, add cumulative weight to the overall case for the Bible's factual accuracy. As renowned archaeologist Nelson Glueck observed: "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which conform in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible" (1959, p. 31).

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Q What caused God?

A Everyone knows the Christian's response is to this question: God is eternal; He had no cause. Although atheists may think that this answer is a cop-out and unscientific, both observation and Revelation declare otherwise.

From what we observe **in nature**, matter and energy are neither created nor destroyed. Scientists refer to this fact as the First Law of Thermodynamics. Evolutionists allege that the Universe began with the explosion of a ball of matter 13.6 billion years ago, yet they never have provided a reasonable explanation for the cause of the "original" ball of matter. An attempt was made recently in the April 28, 2007 issue of *New Scientist* magazine titled "The Beginning: What Triggered the Big Bang." Notice, however, the last line of the article: "[T]he quest to understand the origin of the universe seems destined to continue until we can answer a deeper question: **why is there anything at all instead of nothing?**" (194[2601]:33, emp. added). The fact is, a logical, naturalistic explanation for the origin of the "original" ball of matter that supposedly led to the Universe does not exist. It cannot exist so long as the

First Law of Thermodynamics is true (i.e., matter and energy cannot create itself).

Since the physical Universe exists, and yet it could not have created itself, then the Universe is either eternal or something/someone outside of the Universe must have created it. Relatively few scientists propose that the Universe is eternal. In fact, there would be no point in attempting to explain the "beginning" of the Universe if they believed it always existed. What's more, the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that matter and energy become less usable over time, has led scientists to conclude that the Universe has not always existed.

If matter is not eternal, however, and it cannot create itself, then the only logical conclusion is that something/someone outside of nature (i.e., supernatural) caused the Universe and everything in it. Christians call this Someone, "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 40:28).

Eric Lyons

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IN THE NEWS

In the July 16, 2007 issue of *Newsweek*, Lisa Miller informed readers about a new and different parenting book, titled *Parenting Beyond Belief*. Edited by Dale McGowan, this volume "aims to help folks who are raising their kids without religion deal with the sticky questions that come up about Santa Claus and heaven, and it raises more serious concerns about how to bring up ethical, confident, non-believing kids in a culture saturated with talk about God" (Miller, 2007, p. 10). According to McGowan's Web site, *Parenting Beyond Belief* "is the first comprehensive parenting book by a major publisher on raising children without religion" (2007). McGowan added: "We hope it isn't the last" (2007).

Included in *Parenting Beyond Belief* is discussion about a new summer camp for children of atheists. Camp Quest: The Secular Summer Camp, which operates in six different locations in North America, claims to be "the first residential summer camp in the history of the United States for the children of Atheists, Freethinkers, Humanists, Brights, or whatever other terms might be applied to those who hold to a naturalistic, **not** supernatural world view" (Camp Quest, n.d., emp. added).

It seems as if atheists are more determined than ever to indoctrinate children with godless materials and ideologies. In the end, Dale McGowan's hope of seeing more atheistic materials for families ultimately fails to provide reasonable, not to mention comforting, answers to life's biggest questions. Imagine the child who ponders his origin for the first time: "Mom, why are we

here?" "Ricky," mom replies, "we're here because, by chance, billions of years ago a tiny ball of matter exploded. Eventually Earth was formed, life emerged from lifeless matter, and millions of years later humans evolved from lower animals." "So we're here by accident?" Ricky asks. "That's one way of looking at it," says his mother. *Parenting Beyond Belief* and Camp Quest no doubt help atheistic parents explain origins and ultimate destinations to their children in a more creative way. However, the bottom line is, children will learn that life ultimately is meaningless because their existence is accidental and there is no life beyond death.

The key to an abundant life, both in the present and in the afterlife, is found only through Christ Jesus (John 10:10). May God help us to teach our children this truth, as well as reach out to those reared by atheists, who may never have heard the answers that Jesus and His Word can provide.

Eric Lyons

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Observe that Iredell conceded that in order for the *Constitution* to guarantee Christians the right to worship God according to their own conscience, non-Christians inevitably would be permitted the same constitutional protection. Indeed, as previously noted, the Founders never would have countenanced the persecution of atheists or those who espoused non-Christian religion. Are we to assume from this observation, however, that the Founders held non-Christian religions, like Hinduism, in high regard, or that they encouraged non-Christian religions in the public sector, or that they sanctioned all religions as equally authentic and credible? Absolutely not! As Iredell further explained:

But it is never to be supposed that the people of America will trust their dearest rights to persons who have no religion at all, or a religion materially different from their own. It would be happy for mankind if religion was permitted to take its own course, and maintain itself by the excellence of its own doctrines. The divine Author of our religion never wished for its support by worldly authority. Has he not said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it? It made much greater progress for itself, than when supported by the greatest authority upon earth (Elliot, 4:194, emp. added).

Iredell reasoned that leaving the *Constitution* non-specific with regard to religion would prevent religious persecution. Further, tolerating non-Christian religions would not endanger the Founders' assumption that Christianity would



12th-century Hindu temples in the temple town of Kumbakonam in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu

remain the worldview and moral framework that undergirds the nation. Why? Because he felt confident that Americans never would endanger their dearest rights by voting non-Christians (whether atheists, Muslims, or Hindus) into government. Inviting a Hindu to offer prayer in Congress is a step in that very direction. And did you notice Iredell's allusion to "the divine Author of our religion"? What Author and what religion do you suppose he intended? He quoted that Author in his very next sentence: "Has he not said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?" Those words are the words of Jesus Christ as recorded in Matthew 16:18. The Author to Whom he referred was **Christ**, and Christ is the author of only one religion: **Christianity—not Hinduism**.

Iredell next discoursed on the essentiality of an oath to be taken by those who wish to serve in the government. He insisted that this oath should contain two critical components: belief in a Supreme Being and belief in a future state of re-

wards and punishments. He even cited a legal case in England that occurred some 40 years earlier, pertaining to:

a person who was admitted to take an oath according to the rites of his own country, **though he was a heathen. He was an East Indian**, who had a great suit in chancery, and his answer upon oath to a bill filed against him was absolutely necessary. Not believing either in the Old or New Testament, he could not be sworn in the accustomed manner, but was sworn according to the form of **the Gentoo religion**, which he professed, by touching the foot of a priest. It appeared that, according to the tenets of this religion, its members believed in a Supreme Being, and in a future state of rewards and punishments. It was accordingly held by the judges, upon great consideration, that the oath ought to be received; they considering that it was probable those of that religion were equally bound in conscience by an oath according to their form of swearing, as they themselves were by one of theirs; and that it would be a reproach to the justice of the country, if a man, merely because he was of a different religion from their own, should be denied redress of an injury he had sustained. Ever since this great case, it has been universally considered that, in administering an oath, it is only necessary to inquire if the person who is to take it, believes in a Supreme Being, and in a future state of rewards and punishments. If he does, the oath is to be administered according to that form which it is supposed will bind his conscience most. **It is, however, necessary that such a belief should be entertained**, because otherwise there would be nothing to bind his conscience that could be relied on; since there are many cases where the terror of punishment in this world for perjury could not be dreaded (Elliot, 4:197-198, emp. added).

"Gentoo," a corruption of the Portuguese term *gentio* meaning "heathen" or "gentile," was coined by Europeans to refer to the idol-worshipping peoples of India,

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt

August 8,15,22	Hope Hull, AL	(334) 288-6228
August 25	Birmingham, AL	(256) 435-9356
August 26	Talladega, AL	(256) 362-9242

Eric Lyons

August 1,29	Hope Hull, AL	(334) 281-6020
August 5	Sheffield, AL	(256) 383-1322

Dave Miller

August 2	Huntsville, AL	(256) 837-8730
August 5,12,19,26	Columbiana, AL	(205) 241-9271
August 8	Gulf Shores, AL	(251) 968-7769
August 22	Pulaski, TN	(931) 363-2777



Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed Hindu god of wisdom, in a temple in the Indian state of Karnataka

and to distinguish Hindus from Muslims (see Mish, 1986, p. 512; John, n.d.). Observe that Iredell was not advocating the equal acceptance of Hinduism. He simply offered the only means by which an essential, though non-Christian, witness can serve in a court case. Yet even those remarks are couched in the context of the difficulties posed by those who come to America but refuse to embrace the Christian worldview—since our entire justice system depends on a belief in the God of the Bible as well as heaven and hell. [Observe that neither of these two prerequisites to speaking in court was deemed a violation of the freedom of religion clause of the *Constitution*.]

The next to speak was the Governor of North Carolina—Samuel Johnston. Eight years earlier he had served as a member of the Continental Congress. He, too, was astonished that some were concerned that the *Constitution* provided insufficient guarantee of the priority and free exercise of Protestant religion to the exclusion of competing religions:

I read the Constitution over and over, but could not see one cause of apprehension or jealousy on this subject. When I heard there were apprehensions that **the pope of Rome** could be the President of the United States, I was greatly astonished. It might as well be said that the king of England or France, or the Grand Turk [a Muslim—DM], could be chosen to that office. It would have been as good an argument. It appears to me that it would have been dangerous, if Congress could intermeddle with the subject of religion. **True religion is derived from a much higher source than human laws.** When any attempt is made, by any government, to restrain men's consciences, no good consequence can possibly follow (Elliot, 4:198, emp. added).

Observe that the governor argued that the odds of a non-Protestant getting into

office were so infinitesimal as to merit little concern. Also, being the one true religion and having the backing of God Himself, Christianity can fend for itself without the “restraint” of human government. But then the governor offered a rather chilling prediction:

It is apprehended that Jews, Mahometans, **pagans, &c.**, may be elected to high offices under the government of the United States. **Those who are Mahometans, or any others who are not professors of the Christian religion, can never be elected to the office of President, or other high office, but in one of two cases. First, if the people of America lay aside the Christian religion altogether, it may happen. Should this unfortunately take place,** the people will choose such men as think as they do themselves. Another case is, if any persons of such descriptions should, **notwithstanding their religion,** acquire the confidence and esteem of the people of America **by their good conduct and practice of virtue,** they may be chosen. I leave it to gentlemen's candor to judge **what probability there is** of the people's choosing men of different sentiments from themselves (Elliot, 4:198-199, emp. added).

Does the *Constitution* allow Americans to elect to political office, or invite to conduct prayer in Congress, people who do not profess the Christian religion? Yes, it does. Would Americans ever actually do that? The Founders' prediction: very unlikely and highly improbable. But if it ever were to happen—**it would be most unfortunate!** Indeed, inviting a Hindu to lead Congress in prayer is equally unfortunate.

Governor Johnston then explained that, though each of the 13 states was populated heavily by professors of one or more of the various Protestant denominations, “there is no cause of fear that any one religion shall be exclusively es-

tablished” (Elliot, 4:199)—further testimony to the fact that the single religion of the United States was almost entirely Christian (in the form of Protestant sects) to the exclusion of atheism and world religions such as Hinduism. But David Caldwell (also a minister) rose and reiterated the lingering concern that danger might arise:

In the first place, he said, there was an invitation for **Jews and pagans of every kind** to come among us. **At some future period, said he, this might endanger the character of the United States.** Moreover, even those who do not regard religion, acknowledge that **the Christian religion is best calculated, of all religions, to make good members of society, on account of its morality.** I think, then, added he, that, in a political view, those gentlemen who formed this Constitution should not have given this invitation to **Jews and heathens. All those who have any religion are against the emigration of those people from the eastern hemisphere** (Elliot, 4:199, emp. added).

In other words, Jews, pagans, and people from the eastern hemisphere (which certainly includes Hindus) would constitute a threat to the religious and moral foundation on which America was founded. They were right. After all, Hinduism is thoroughgoing pantheism. Orthodox Hindus are adamant that the nurture of cows lies at the core of Hindu dharma (a Sanskrit term that refers to the “right way of living” or the “correct understanding of nature”). The cow is *aghanya*—that which may not be slaughtered. While not necessarily worshipped as a god, Hindu scriptures, nevertheless, extol the cow as sacred (e.g., *Rig veda* viii, 102,15-16; vi, 28,1-8). World renowned Hindu Mahatma Gandhi insisted:

Cow protection is the gift of Hinduism to the world.... I would not kill a human being to protect a cow, as **I will not kill a cow to save a human life,** be it ever so precious. My religion teaches me that I should by personal conduct instill into the minds of those who might hold different views the conviction that **cow-killing is a sin** and that, therefore, it ought to be abandoned (as quoted in “Sacred Cow...,” 2004, emp. added).

The Founders did not share such outlandish notions. They believed the evidence for the existence of the one true God of the Bible and the truthfulness of the Christian religion was decisive.

Mr. Spencer rose to reaffirm the same two reassurances asserted by Governor Johnston:



The sacred cow of India

It is feared...that persons of bad principles, deists, atheists, &c., may come into this country; and there is nothing to restrain them from being eligible to offices. He asked if it was reasonable **to suppose that the people would choose men without regarding their characters....** But in this case, as there is not a religious test required, **it leaves religion on the solid foundation of its own inherent validity**, without any connection with temporal authority (Elliot, 4:200, emp. added).

Again, the delegates were concerned about the nation remaining firmly Christian in its overall thrust, but they realized they could not force everyone to take a religious oath without creating conflict. Therefore, (1) they relied on the good sense of the American people to refrain from appointing to political office any who do not possess Christian character, and (2) they assumed Christianity could demonstrate its own credibility and superiority without any help from human government.

Governor Johnston brought the discussion to a close with an amicable summary of the mutual sentiments of the delegates, as reported in the following words:

He admitted a possibility of Jews, **pagans, &c.**, emigrating to the United States; yet, he said, **they could not be in proportion to the emigration of Christians** who should come from other countries; that, in all probability, **the children even of such people would be Christians**; and that this, with the rapid population of the United States, **their zeal for religion**, and love of liberty, would, he trusted, **add to the progress of the Christian religion among us** (Elliot, 4:200, emp. added).

The Founders were walking a tightrope. On one hand, they did not want to be coercive in the matter of religion. They did not want to cram Christianity down anyone's throat. They wanted America free of religious persecution. On the other hand, they understood that the truthfulness and superiority of the Christian religion was the essential platform on

which America's political institutions were poised. So they assuaged their fears by consoling themselves with the thought that the American people would forever have the good sense to retain Christianity as the central religion of the nation, and that they would refrain from inviting into their national councils and halls of government anyone who did not share those religious and moral convictions. These early Americans surely would be incredulous, bewildered, and disgusted if they were here to witness a Hindu on the floor of the U.S. Senate chanting a Hindu prayer to gods "which by nature are no gods," "the work of men's hands—wood and stone" (Galatians 4:8; 2 Kings 19:18). "Let all be put to shame who serve carved images, who boast of idols" (Psalm 97:7).

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Shiva, Hindu god of destruction, on Mauritius Island in the Indian Ocean

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

APOLOGETICS
PRESS, INC.

MORALITY TRACTS FOR CHILDREN

Perhaps more than ever before in American history, young people find themselves in an environment that is increasingly hostile to their development of proper moral sensibilities. With evolution, humanism, and secularism dominating public schools from kindergarten to college, many children have little encouragement to cultivate Christian morality. Conscientious parents can do their best, but it would be nigh unto impossible to shield children from every possible influence.

From television, cinema, magazines, and books, to friends, teachers, and acquaintances, young people encounter a host of sources that potentially introduce spiritually destructive ideas into their minds.

In addition to monitoring and supervising our children's contact with these subversive, worldly influences, it is imperative that parents and grandparents provide the young people in their lives with spiritually enriching, faith-building materials. Think of the many gifts that we typically give our children and grandchildren. How many of those gifts are frivolous, fleshly baubles that do nothing to nourish the human spirit and "perish with using"? Since Satan is working 24 hours a day to capture our young people, how dedicated and diligent ought we to be in our efforts to train, nurture, and inoculate children with the information necessary to prepare them for eternity?

Once again, A.P. is working feverishly to fill these crucial services. Our kids' Morality Tracts Series has just been released. This series targets young people in the 10- to 12-year-old range. Consider the 12 subjects these tracts address: Bragging, Homosexuality, How We Treat Others, Jealousy, Lying, Obeying Your Parents, Our Words, Pornography, Sex Before Marriage, Stealing, What Goes into Your Body, and What Goes into Your Mind. As usual, our team of talented writers has done a marvelous job of handling some rather sensitive topics in a delicate and mature fashion.

May I encourage you to take advantage of this outstanding resource for children? Let us assist them in donning "the whole armor of God, that [they] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:11-13).

Dave Miller



See the Center Spread
for More Details